



Evansville, Wisconsin, is located in south-central Wisconsin, twenty miles south of the state capitol and eighteen miles northwest of Janesville.

Evansville is the fastest growing community in Rock County. It offers a historic backdrop for its business and industrial sectors. The streets of Evansville Wisconsin are an architectural museum of homes that date from the 1850s to the modern era.

From Lake Leota Park to the new "high-tech" high school, Evansville provides a unique richness of life for its residents and visitors.

## What is Planning?<sup>1</sup>

- Planning is an orderly, open approach to determine local needs, goals and priorities, and developing a guide for action.
- Planning is a concentrated effort by a community to reach a balance between the natural environment and residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural development.
- A plan is a guide for public officials and private citizens to use in making informed decisions that will affect their community.
- Planning is a process that helps a community prepare for change rather than react to it.

## Planning is not...

- An attempt to replace market forces of supply and demand. It helps shape and channel market forces by establishing certain guidelines to manage development.
- Action. A plan is only a guide for action and implementation.
- An instrument for immediate change. Change will occur incrementally as the plan is implemented.
- Static. Good planning requires continual review of implementation successes and failures, citizen desires and the surrounding environment so that the plan can be adjusted as needed.
- Zoning. A comprehensive plan is a foundation and guide for many tools that may be used to implement the plan. Zoning is one of these tools. Utilities, capital improvements planning, and subdivision regulations are examples of other tools.

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Koles, Comprehensive Planning Fundamentals, UW-Extension, 2000.

## Background

The City of Evansville's most recent planning efforts began with its 1986 Master Plan. That document, functioned as a basic land use plan with little emphasis placed on utilities, community facilities and intergovernmental coordination.

In 1996, the City of Evansville completed an update of the 1986 plan. That update included changes to the plan map, coordination efforts with the Town of Union and Rock County to discuss future development strategies, and updated goals, objectives and policies. Results from the 1990 census are also included in that plan.

In January 2002, the City of Evansville formed a Smart Growth Planning Committee (SGPC). The SGPC did much of the preliminary work on this comprehensive plan, including selecting OMNNI Associates as a consultant in July of 2003. The committee met two times each month to review draft plan chapters, maps and prepare supporting materials like the community survey.

Developing this Smart Growth Plan sends a clear message that the City wishes to act proactively – to set its own ground rules for the types of development that will benefit the City. To develop an effective comprehensive plan, City leaders sought assistance from OMNNI Associates, a consulting firm based in Appleton, WI.

## Why Develop a Plan?

This plan is being made with the general purpose of guiding and accomplishing coordinated and harmonious development of the City which will, in accordance with existing and future needs, promote public health, safety, morals, order, convenience, prosperity and the general welfare, as well as efficiency and economy in the process of development.

## Scope of This Document

This 20-year *City of Evansville Comprehensive Plan*, includes four major components:

- *A profile of the demographic, economic and housing characteristics of the City;*
- *An inventory and assessment of the environment, community facilities, and natural resources;*
- *Visions, goals, objectives, policies and implementation strategies; and*
- *A land use map that depicts the future land use patterns in the City.*

This plan was developed under the authority of 1999 Wisconsin Act 9, Wisconsin's "Smart Growth" Law. The law requires that a 20-year comprehensive plan be developed and adopted by all units of government that wish to have a role in land use issues. The law authorizes municipalities to prepare and adopt comprehensive plans to serve as guides for the development of their communities.

### DEFINITIONS

**Vision:** An overall statement related to each of the nine required elements expressing the City's expectations for the future. These statements provide a framework and context to consider when making future land use decisions.

**Goal:** A statement that describes, usually in general terms, a desired future condition. Goals will usually only addresses one specific aspect of the vision.

**Objective:** A statement that describes a specific action or condition that is to be attained within a stated period of time. Objectives include ordinances changes, new programs, and other tasks. The objectives serve as a "to do" list to implement the plan. To be effective, objectives must be evaluated regularly and updated as necessary.

**Policy:** A course of action, or rule of conduct, used to achieve the goals and objectives of the plan. Policies are based on specific research. Therefore, they are developed after vision statements. In some cases, the policies relate closely to the vision, but provide more refined, specific actions.

The *City of Evansville Comprehensive Plan* is divided into a series of chapters following the nine (9) required elements defined in the Smart Growth Law:



1. Issues and Opportunities (Chapters 2 & 3)
2. Housing (Chapter 4)
3. Transportation (Chapter 5)
4. Utilities and Community Facilities (Chapter 6)
5. Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources (Chapter 7)
6. Economic Development (Chapter 8)
7. Land Use (Chapter 9 and 10)
8. Intergovernmental Cooperation (Chapter 11)
9. Implementation (Chapter 12)

In addition, the state requires that these elements be developed in concert with Wisconsin's 14 goals for local planning. These goals are highlighted throughout this plan and listed below.

1. Promotion of the redevelopment of lands with existing infrastructure and public services and the maintenance and rehabilitation of existing residential, commercial and industrial structures.
2. Encouragement of neighborhood designs that support a range of transportation choices.
3. Protection of natural areas, including wetlands, wildlife habitats, lakes, woodlands, open spaces and groundwater resources.
4. Protection of economically productive areas, including farmland and forests.
5. Encouragement of land uses, densities and regulations that promote efficient development patterns and relatively low municipal, state governmental and utility costs.
6. Preservation of cultural, historic and archaeological sites.
7. Encouragement of coordination and cooperation among nearby units of government.
8. Building of community identity by revitalizing main streets and enforcing design standards.
9. Providing an adequate supply of affordable housing for individuals of all income levels throughout each community.
10. Providing adequate infrastructure and public services and an adequate supply of developable land to meet existing and future market demand for residential, commercial and industrial uses.
11. Promoting the expansion or stabilization of the current economic base and the creation of a range of employment opportunities at the state, regional and local levels.
12. Balancing individual property rights with community interests and goals.
13. Planning and development of land uses that create or preserve varied and unique urban and rural communities.
14. Providing an integrated, efficient and economical transportation system that affords mobility, convenience and safety and that meets the needs of all citizens, including transit-dependent and disabled citizens.

## Public Involvement

The *City of Evansville Comprehensive Plan* was developed in an environment rich with opportunities for public input. To gain citizen understanding and support throughout the planning process the public was provided with a variety of meaningful opportunities to become involved in the process. What follows is a description of the primary opportunities for public input in the planning program. The adopted *Public Participation Plan* is provided as an Appendix to this plan.

### KICK-OFF MEETING

The City of Evansville “kick-off” meeting was held on August 21, 2003 in the Evansville High School. At that meeting, OMNNI Associates presented an overview of the planning process and provided general information about Smart Growth and its importance to Evansville. The meeting concluded with a discussion of area values (presented at the end of this chapter). Interested residents were advised on how to keep informed about and become involved with the comprehensive planning process.

This workshop also provided an opportunity to identify and evaluate community strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This information was used to develop draft goals for the City of Evansville Comprehensive Plan.

Approximately 35 people attended the “kick-off” meeting.

### INTERGOVERNMENTAL MEETING

As part of the planning program, the City hosted an intergovernmental meeting on October 9, 2003. Representatives from neighboring units of government, the Evansville School District, Rock County, WDNR and WisDOT were invited to participate to discuss existing plans that Evansville should be aware of and current intergovernmental successes and challenges. Twelve representatives were able to attend this meeting. Follow-up correspondence, including the draft Intergovernmental Element chapter, was mailed to 26 area representatives for feedback.

At the meeting, participants were given the opportunity for mutual exchange of ideas and recommendations to address any conflicts. To facilitate discussion, participants worked in small groups with an assignment designed to get people talking about the future.

### ELEMENT WORKSHOPS

In 2004, the City hosted a daylong series of workshops to review and discuss the Housing, Transportation, Utilities and Community Facilities and Economic Development Elements. Prior to the workshops, a series of invitations were mailed to community stakeholders. At each workshop, a preliminary draft was presented for review and discussion. Approximately 70 people participated in the workshops.

## MAP FORUM

At about the mid-point of the planning program, the City hosted a Map Forum attended by approximately 40 residents. During this event, residents, business owners and others had the opportunity to review a series of maps from the plan. Of particular emphasis, were the draft Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Maps.

Later, participants had the opportunity to develop their own personal Future Land Use Map of the City as part of a cognitive mapping exercise facilitated by OMNNI Associates (refer to Chapter 10 to learn more). These individual maps were a resource for developing the *City of Evansville Future Land Use Maps*.



## OPEN HOUSE

The purpose of the plan “open house” was to display the plan maps and text in an informal setting. At the “open house,” there were no formal presentations, minutes or voting. Rather, the maps and plan text were on display for interested residents to review at their own pace. This meeting allowed participants to share their ideas in a setting that was much less formal than the public hearing.

## MEDIA RELEASES AND THE INTERNET

Throughout the planning program media releases were provided to the local newspaper. In addition, an interactive web site was provided as a link to the OMNNI (City’s Planning Consultant) web site and the City of Evansville web site in an effort to keep the public informed. The page included meeting schedules, summaries of past meetings, draft maps and plan chapters, and general education materials about the Smart Growth Law. The site was updated at least once a month to ensure that the information was current.

## COMMUNITY SURVEY

As part of the Planning Program, a community-wide survey was distributed to a sample of 467 households to provide an opportunity for direct resident input. The response rate for the survey was 75%. The results of the survey are presented throughout this plan to highlight resident opinions and interests. A copy of the survey instrument and results is provided in the appendix.

## SMART GROWTH PLANNING COMMITTEE WORKING MEETINGS

Throughout the planning program, the Smart Growth Planning Committee convened monthly to review draft text, maps, and other information pertinent to the planning program. Each of these working meetings was open to the public.



## City Values

During the “kick-off” meeting held in August 2003, participants were asked to identify the values that influence people to remain, take pride in, and become actively involved in the community. In addition, the Evansville Community Partnership held a public gathering at the Masonic Temple in May 2001 that generated a list of values that is quite similar to the values identified at the “kick-off” meeting (listed below).

These value statements provided a direction for implementation of the *City of Evansville Comprehensive Plan*. Moreover, these values clearly indicate that residents share a strong sense of community identity and pride closely associated with the rural character and natural areas that make Evansville a desirable place to live.

### Residents are Satisfied with Evansville as a Place to Live

Based on the 2004 survey results, 94% of residents are satisfied (62%) or very satisfied (32%) with Evansville as a place to live.

- *We value the small town atmosphere. Evansville is really the City you think of when you hear things like: “home town”, “heartland America,” and the “real” America.*
- *We value the beautiful City parks.*
- *We value the golf course.*
- *We value the strong sense of community history defined by historical buildings/ architecture, traditional downtown and beautiful homes.*
- *We value our well-maintained historic district.*
- *We value our well-maintained City environment.*
- *We value our resident involvement in the community.*
- *We value our ease of daily living because everything is close by and easy to get to (i.e. dentist, doctor, post office, schools, shopping, restaurants).*
- *We value our sense of safety and closeness of the community – everyone knows everyone.*
- *We value our low crime rate.*
- *We value the peaceful, rural agricultural setting beyond City limits.*
- *We value the relaxed quality of living the City offers.*
- *We value local events that build community (i.e. 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade, Community Garage Sale, Community Theater, Lake Concerts).*
- *We value our great library.*
- *We value our generous businesses who give money and time to community projects.*
- *We value our housing choices.*
- *We value our trees.*
- *We value our friendly residents.*
- *We value Lake Leota.*
- *We value the school district.*
- *We value our central location between Madison, Janesville and Beloit.*
- *We value the fact that Evansville is a great place to raise a family.*
- *We value the quiet streets.*
- *We value our small City size. We value that there are no stoplights in the City.*